Minor Poems

Edited by HANNAFORD BENNETT

Minor Poems

By

John Milton

The Carlton Classics

With Biographical Introduction by

Hannaford Bennett

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Contents

	PAGE
Biographical Introduction	7
A Paraphrase on Psalm CXIV	17
Psalm CXXXVI	18
On the Death of a Fair Infant	21
Anno Ætatis XIX	25
On the Morning of Christ's Nativity	29
Upon the Circumcision	40
The Passion	42
On Time	45
At a Solemn Musick	46
Song on May Morning	48
Epitaph on Shakspeare	49
On the University Carrier	50
Another on the Same	51
An Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester	53
L'Allegro	56
Il Penseroso	62
Arcades	68
Comus	73
Lycidas	113
Sonnet. To the Nightingale	120
Sonnet. On his being arrived to the Age of Twenty-three	121

PAGE

Sonnet. When the Assault was intended to the City 122
Sonnet. To a Virtuous Young Lady . . 123
Sonnet. To the Lady Margaret Ley . . 124
Sonnet. On the Detraction which followed upon my writing Certain Treatises . . . 125
Sonnet. On the Same 126
Sonnet. To Mr H. Lawes on the publishing his Airs 127
Sonnet. On the Religious Memory of Mrs Catherine Thomson 128
On the New Forcers of Conscience . . . 129
Sonnet. To the Lord General Fairfax . . 130
Sonnet. To the Lord General Cromwell . . 131
Sonnet. To Sir Henry Vane the Younger . . 132
Sonnet. On the late Massacre in Piedmont . . 133
Sonnet. On his Blindness 134
Sonnet. To Mr Lawrence 135
Sonnet. To Cyriack Skinner . . . 136
Sonnet. To the Same 137
Sonnet. On his Deceased Wife . . . 138

Biographical Introduction

It is not necessary to plunge very deeply into the ancestry of the Miltons. The family is said to have had its origin and to have given its name to a place in Oxfordshire. In the sixteenth century a gentleman of the name of John Milton or Mylton (for it was thus spelt in the baptismal register of the poet) was Under Ranger of the royal Forest of Shotover, near Oxford. He was a devout Roman Catholic, and he signalised his antipathy to the reformed religion by disinheriting his son who adopted it. The son came to London and followed the profession of scrivener, a profession which combined the practice of the notary with that of the attorney. He had received an Oxford education, and he possessed a taste for music and versification. Some of his compositions are given in Burney's *History of Music*,

and we find him, precisian and man of business as he was, composing madrigals to Oriana and rivalling Bird and Gibbons as a writer of sacred song. In course of time he acquired a "plentiful estate," and when he had turned forty married Sarah Caston or Bradshaw. The name is uncertain. His second child and first son was the great poet.

The life of John Milton coincides almost exactly with the period of Puritan rule in English history. When he was born Puritanism was beginning to be a power, and when he died it was a lost cause. Milton was born in London on the 9th of December 1608, at the sign of the Spread Eagle in Bread Street. The Spread Eagle was not a tavern, as might be supposed, but was his father's house, which bore an armorial sign (houses were rarely numbered before 1756), as was the custom even with the nobility in those days. It was a Puritan household, but there was nothing narrow or gloomy in Milton's early training. "My father," he says, "destined me while yet a little boy to the study of humane letters, which I seized with such eagerness that

from the twelfth year of my age I scarcely ever went from my lessons to bed before midnight." He learned Italian and French as well as Greek and Latin and Hebrew. Nor were English letters neglected. Spenser gave the first inspiration to his poetic genius. In spite of "a certain reservedness of natural disposition," which turned from "festivities and jests, in which I acknowledge my faculty to be very slight," the young student could enjoy the "jest and youthful jollity" of the world around him, its "quips and cranks and wanton wiles," and join in the village fair "where the jolly rebecks sound to many a youth and many a maid, dancing in the chequered shade." But for coarser pleasures the youthful Puritan had no taste. "A certain reservedness of nature, an honest haughtiness and self-esteem, kept me still above those low descents of mind," he wrote. "If ever God instilled an intense love of moral beauty into the mind of any man," he said, "he has instilled it into mine." . . . "Love Virtue, she alone is free," were the last words of his *Comus*.

It was in this spirit that Milton passed from the tutorship of Thomas Young, a Puritan clergyman, who was dearer to him "than was Socrates to Alcibiades, Aristotle to Alexander, or Chiron to Achilles," into the hands of Dr Gill of St Paul's School, "an ingeniose person notwithstanding his humours, particularly his whipping fits," and finally to Christ College, Cambridge.

At Cambridge, according to Anthony Ward, Milton "performed the collegiate and academical exercises to the admiration of all, and was esteemed to be a virtuous and sober person, yet not to be ignorant of his own parts." Another authority states that he was nicknamed "the lady," on account of his fair complexion and feminine appearance. But he left Cambridge, as he afterwards said, "free from all reproach, and approved by all honest men," intending to follow "that same lot, however mean or high, towards which time leads me and the will of Heaven." His father had destined him for the Church, but Milton would not qualify for a

priesthood which could only be "bought with servitude and forswearing." And in spite of his father's regrets he retired to Horton, a village near Windsor. It was the new home in which the scrivener had settled upon relinquishing business, and in this retreat Milton continued his reading of the Greek and Latin classics. In his youth he had given some measure of his poetical gifts. At fifteen he had paraphrased the hundred and fourteenth and hundred and twenty-sixth Psalms, and at seventeen had composed an epitaph *On the Death of a Fair Enfant.* "At my father's residence, whither he had retired to pass his old age," writes Milton, "I was wholly intent, through a period of absolute leisure, on a steady perusal of the Greek and Latin writers, but still so that occasionally I exchanged the country for the city, either for the purpose of buying books or for that of learning anything new in mathematics or in music, in which I then took delight." Yet it was during the years of his life at Horton, though one might not think so from this description, that he compassed the

finest and most classic of his minor poems—*L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Arcades, Comus* and *Lycidas*.

In the year after the publication of *Lycidas* Milton visited the Continent and remained for some fifteen months travelling in France and Italy. The news of the civil disturbances at home determined him to hasten back, "inasmuch," he says, "as I thought it base to be travelling at my ease for intellectual culture while my fellow-countrymen were fighting for liberty"; but he did not join the Parliamentary army. He settled down quietly in Aldersgate Street in a sort of private academy, and undertook the education of the sons of his sister and some other youths. In a little while he was engaged in polemical writings, and for fifteen years only a few sonnets broke his silence as a singer. His first prose work was a treatise on the *Reformation in England*, and it was followed by three other treatises, of which the principal was *The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelatry*. In 1644 Milton published the

most important of his prose works, *Areopagitica*, an appeal for the liberty of unlicensed printing. Appointed Latin Secretary to the Council, he became more and more immersed in the invectives and controversies which surrounded the execution of the King. His *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* was followed by *Eikonoclastes*, which was an answer to the famous *Eikon Basilike*. The French writer De Saumaise (Salmasius) issued a *Defensio Regia* on behalf of Charles II., and Milton replied with his Latin work, *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano*. He had already lost the sight of one eye, and had been warned that further study would destroy the sight of the other; but he persisted in his work and became totally blind. "The choice lay before me," Milton wrote in the preface to the *Defensio Secunda*, "between dereliction of a supreme duty and loss of eyesight; in such a case I could not listen to the physician, not if Æsculapius himself had spoken from his sanctuary; I could not but obey that inward monitor, I know not what, that spake to me from Heaven. . . . I thereupon

concluded to employ the little remaining eyesight I was to enjoy, in doing this, the greatest service to the common weal it was in my power to render." As Mr Church remarks in his *Life of Milton*, "he could not foresee that in less than ten years the great work would be totally annihilated. . . and the *Defensio*, on which he had expended his last year of eyesight, only mentioned because it had been written by the author of *Paradise Lost*."

At the Restoration Milton was imprisoned for a while and two of his books were burnt by the common hangman. But he was released upon paying the prison fees, and allowed to live the remainder of his days without let or hindrance. To the loss of his secretaryship were added pecuniary misfortunes which necessitated the sale of part of his library for subsistence. The grace and benignity of his youth had given place to a stern and exacting old age. His daughters were compelled to read to him in languages which they did not comprehend and rebelled utterly against the infliction. Yet it was in the closing

years of his life that he composed the great poem upon which his genius had for many years been musing. Seven years after the Restoration *Paradise Lost* appeared; and four years later *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, in which we see the poet, like Samson himself, "fallen on evil days and evil tongues, with darkness and with danger compassed round." But the last years of Milton's life were marked by a noble simplicity. "He listened every morning to a chapter of the Hebrew Bible, and after musing in silence for a while pursued his studies till mid-day. Then he took exercise for an hour, played for another hour on the organ or viol, and renewed his studies. The evening was spent in converse with visitors and friends. For lonely and unpopular as Milton was, there was one thing about him which made his house in Bunhill Fields a place of pilgrimage to the wits of the Restoration. He was the last of the Elizabethans." In his last year he published a *Treatise on Logic, True Religion, Heresy, Schism, and Toleration*, and *Familiar Epistles in Latin*.

Milton died on the 15th of November 1674, and was buried in the Church of St Giles, Cripplegate. "The funeral was attended," says Tolland, "by all the author's learned and great friends in London, and not without a friendly concourse of the vulgar."

HANNAFORD BENNETT

Milton's Minor Poems

A PARAPHRASE ON PSALM CXIV

THIS AND THE FOLLOWING PSALM WERE DONE BY THE AUTHOR AT FIFTEEN YEARS OLD.

When the blest seed of Terah's faithful son,
After long toil, their liberty had won,
And past from Pharian fields to Canaan land,
Led by the strength of the Almighty's hand,
Jehovah's wonders were in Israel shown,
His praise and glory was in Israel known.
That saw the troubled Sea, and shivering fled,
And sought to hide his froth-becurled head
Low in the earth; Jordan's clear streams recoil,
As a faint host that hath receiv'd the foil.
The high huge-bellied mountains skip like rams
Amongst their ewes, the little hills like lambs.
Why fled the ocean? And why skipt the mountains?
Why turned Jordan toward his crystal fountains?
Shake, Earth; and at the presence be aghast
Of Him that ever was, and aye shall last;
That glassy floods from rugged rocks can crush,
And make soft rills from fiery flint-stones gush.

PSALM CXXXVI

Let us with a gladsome mind
Praise the Lord, for he is kind;
For his mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

Let us blaze his Name abroad,
For of gods he is the God;
For his etc.

O let us his praises tell,
Who doth the wrathful tyrants quell;
For his etc.

Who with his miracles doth make
Amazed Heaven and Earth to shake;
For his etc.

Who by his wisdom did create
The painted heavens so full of state;
For his etc.

Who did the solid earth ordain
To rise above the watery plain;
For his etc.

Who by his all-commanding might
Did fill the new-made world with light;
For his etc.

And caus'd the golden-tressed sun
All the day long his course to run;
For his etc.

The horned moon to shine by night,
Amongst her spangled sisters bright;
For his etc.

He, with his thunder-clasping hand,
Smote the first-born of Egypt land;
For his etc.

And, in despite of Pharaoh fell,
He brought from thence his Israel;
For his etc.

The ruddy waves he cleft in twain
Of the Erythræan main;
For his etc.

The floods stood still, like walls of glass,
While the Hebrew bands did pass;
For his etc.

But full soon they did devour
The tawny king with all his power;
For his etc.

His chosen people he did bless
In the wasteful wilderness;
For his etc.

In bloody battle he brought down
Kings of prowess and renown;
For his etc.

He foil'd bold Seon and his host,
That rul'd the Amorrean coast;
For his etc.

And large-limb'd Og he did subdue,
With all his over-hardy crew;
For his etc.

And, to his servant Israel
He gave their land therein to dwell;
For his etc.

He hath with a piteous eye
Beheld us in our misery;
For his etc.

And freed us from the slavery
Of the invading enemy;
For his etc.

All living creatures he doth feed,
And with full hand supplies their need;
For his etc.

Let us therefore warble forth
His mighty majesty and worth;
For his etc.

That his mansion hath on high
Above the reach of mortal eye;
For his mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

ON THE DEATH OF A FAIR INFANT, DYING OF A COUGH

I

O FAIREST flower, no sooner blown but blasted,
Soft silken primrose fading timelessly,
Summer's chief honour, if thou hadst outlasted
Bleak Winter's force that made thy blossom dry;
For he, being amorous on that lovely dye
That did thy cheek envermeil, thought to kiss,
But kill'd, alas; and then bewail'd his fatal bliss.

II

For since grim Aquilo, his charioteer,
By boisterous rape the Athenian damsel got,
He thought it touch'd his deity full near,
If likewise he some fair one wedded not,
Thereby to wipe away the infamous blot
Of long-uncoupled bed and childless eld,
Which, 'mongst the wanton gods, a foul reproach was held.

III

So, mounting up in icy-pearled car,
Through middle empire of the freezing air
He wander'd long till thee he spied from far;
There ended was his quest, there ceas'd his care:
Down he descended from his snow-soft chair,
But, all unwares, with his cold-kind embrace
Unhous'd thy virgin soul from her fair biding place.

IV

Yet art thou not inglorious in thy fate;
For so Apollo, with unweeting hand,
Whilom did slay his dearly-loved mate,
Young Hyacinth, born on Eurotas' strand,
Young Hyacinth, the pride of Spartan land;
But then transform'd him to a purple flower:
Alack, that so to change thee Winter had no power!

V

Yet can I not persuade me thou art dead,
Or that thy corse corrupts in earth's dark womb,
Or that thy beauties lie in wormy bed,
Hid from the world in a low-delved tomb:
Could Heaven, for pity, thee so strictly doom?
Oh no! for something in thy face did shine
Above mortality, that show'd thou wast divine.

VI

Resolve me then, oh Soul most surely blest,
(If so it be that thou these plaints dost hear;)
Tell me, bright Spirit, where'er thou hoverest,
Whether above that high first-moving sphere,
Or in the Elysian fields, (if such there were;)
Oh say me true, if thou wert mortal wight,
And why from us so quickly thou didst take thy flight?

VII

Wert thou some star which from the ruin'd roof
Of shak'd Olympus by mischance didst fall;
Which careful Jove in Nature's true behoof
Took up, and in fit place did reinstall?
Or did of late Earth's sons besiege the wall
Of sheeny Heaven, and thou, some goddess fled,
Amongst us here below to hide thy nectar'd head?

VIII

Or wert thou that just Maid, who once before
Forsook the hated earth, O tell me sooth,
And cam'st again to visit us once more?
Or wert thou that sweet-smiling youth?
Or that crown'd matron, sage white-robed Truth?
Or any other of that heavenly brood
Let down in cloudy throne to do the world some good?

IX

Or wert thou of the golden-winged host,
Who, having clad thyself in human weed,
To earth from thy prefixed seat didst post,
And after short abode fly back with speed,
As if to show what creatures heaven doth breed;
Thereby to set the hearts of men on fire
To scorn the sordid world, and unto heaven aspire?

X

But oh! why didst thou not stay here below
To bless us with thy heaven-lov'd innocence,

To slake His wrath whom sin hath made our foe,
To turn swift-rushing black Perdition hence,
Or drive away the slaughtering Pestilence,
To stand 'twixt us and our deserved smart?
But thou canst best perform that office where thou art.

XI

Then thou, the Mother of so sweet a Child,
Her false-imagin'd loss cease to lament,
And wisely learn to curb thy sorrows wild;
Think what a present thou to God hast sent,
And render Him with patience what He lent;
This if thou do, He will an offspring give,
That, till the world's last end, shall make thy name to live.

ANNO ÆTATIS XIX

AT A VACATION EXERCISE IN THE COLLEGE, PART LATIN, PART ENGLISH.

The Latin Speeches ended, the English thus began :—

HAIL, native Language, that by sinews weak
Didst move my first endeavouring tongue to speak,
And mad'st imperfect words with childish trips,
Half unpronounc'd, slide through my infant lips,
Driving dumb Silence from the portal door,
Where he had mutely sat two years before:
Here I salute thee, and thy pardon ask
That now I use thee in my latter task:
Small loss it is that thence can come unto thee,
I know my tongue but little grace can do thee:
Thou need'st not be ambitious to be first,
Believe me I have thither pack'd the worst:
And, if it happen as I did forecast,
The daintiest dishes shall be serv'd up last.
I pray thee then deny me not thy aid
For this same small neglect that I have made:
But haste thee straight to do me once a pleasure,
And from thy wardrobe bring thy chiefest treasure,
Not those new-fangled toys, and trimming slight,
Which takes our late fantasticks with delight;
But cull those richest robes, and gay'st attire,
Which deepest spirits and choicest wits desire.

I have some naked thoughts that rove about,
And loudly knock to have their passage out:
And, weary of their place, do only stay,
Till thou hast deck'd them in thy best array;
That so they may, without suspect or fears,
Fly swiftly to this fair assembly's ears;
Yet I had rather, if I were to chuse,
Thy service in some graver subject use,
Such as may make thee search thy coffers round,
Before thou clothe my fancy in fit sound:
Such where the deep transported mind may soar
Above the wheeling poles, and at Heaven's door
Look in, and see each blissful deity
How he before the thunderous throne doth lie,
Listening to what unshorn Apollo sings
To the touch of golden wires, while Hebe brings
Immortal nectar to her kingly sire:
Then passing through the spheres of watchful fire,
And misty regions of wide air next under,
And hills of snow, and lofts of piled thunder,
May tell at length how green-ey'd Neptune raves,
In Heaven's defiance mustering all his waves;
Then sing of secret things that came to pass
When beldam Nature in her cradle was ;
And last of kings, and queens, and heroes old,
Such as the wise Demodocus once told
In solemn songs at king Alcinous' feast,
While sad Ulysses' soul, and all the rest,
Are held, with his melodious harmony,
In willing chains and sweet captivity.

But fie, my wandering Muse, how thou dost stray!
Expectance calls thee now another way;
Thou know'st it must be now thy only bent
To keep in compass of thy predicament:
Then quick about thy purpos'd business come,
That to the next I may resign my room.

Then ENS *is represented as Father of the Predicaments, his two sons, whereof the eldest stood for* SUBSTANCE *with his Canons, which* ENS, *thus speaking, explains:—*

Good luck befriend thee, Son; for, at thy birth,
The faery ladies danc'd upon the hearth;
Thy drowsy nurse hath sworn she did them spie
Come tripping to the room where thou didst lie,
And, sweetly singing round about thy bed,
Strew all their blessings on thy sleeping head.
She heard them give thee this, that thou shouldst still
From eyes of mortals walk invisible:
Yet there is something that doth force my fear;
For once it was my dismal hap to hear
A Sibyl old, bow-bent with crooked age,
That far events full wisely could presage,
And, in Time's long and dark prospective glass,
Foresaw what future days should bring to pass;
"Your son," said she, "(nor can you it prevent)
Shall subject be to many an Accident.
O'er all his brethren he shall reign as king,
Yet every one shall make him underling;

And those, that cannot live from him asunder,
Ungratefully shall strive to keep him under;
In worth and excellence he shall out-go them,
Yet, being above them, he shall be below them;
From others he shall stand in need of nothing,
Yet on his brothers shall depend for clothing.
To find a foe it shall not be his hap,
And Peace shall lull him in her flowery lap;
Yet shall he live in strife, and at his door
Devouring war shall never cease to roar;
Yea, it shall be his natural property
To harbour those that are at enmity.
What power, what force, what mighty spell, if not
Your learned hands, can loose this Gordian knot? "

The next, QUANTITY *and* QUALITY, *spake in prose; then* RELATION *was called by his name.*

Rivers, arise; whether thou be the son
Of utmost Tweed, or Ouse, or gulphy Dun,
Or Trent, who, like some Earth-born giant, spreads
His thirty arms along the indented meads;
Or sullen Mole, that runneth underneath;
Or Severn swift, guilty of maiden's death;
Or rocky Avon, or of sedgy Lea,
Or coaly Tyne, or ancient hallow'd Dee;
Or Humber loud, that keeps the Scythian's name;
Or Medway smooth, or royal-tower'd Thame.

The rest was prose.

ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

I

THIS is the month, and this the happy morn,
Wherein the Son of Heaven's Eternal King,
Of wedded Maid and Virgin Mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring;
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That he our deadly forfeit should release,
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

II

That glorious form, that light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of majesty,
Wherewith he wont at Heaven's high council-table
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside; and, here with us to be,
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

III

Say, heavenly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
Afford a present to the Infant God?
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,

To welcome him to this his new abode,
Now while the heaven, by the sun's team untrod,
Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?

IV

See how from far upon the eastern road
The star-led wisards haste with odours sweet:
O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,
And lay it lowly at his blessed feet;
Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,
And join thy voice unto the Angel quire,
From out his secret altar touch'd with hallow'd fire.

THE HYMN

I

It was the winter wild,
While the heaven-born child
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies;
Nature, in awe to him,
Had doff'd her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathise:
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the sun, her lusty paramour.

II

Only with speeches fair
She woos the gentle air
To hide her guilty front with innocent snow;

And on her naked shame,
Pollute with sinful blame,
The saintly veil of maiden white to throw;
Confounded, that her Maker's eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deformities

III

But He, her fears to cease,
Sent down the meek-ey'd Peace;
She, crown'd with olive green, came softly sliding
Down through the turning sphere.
His ready harbinger,
With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing;
And, waving wide her myrtle wand,
She strikes a universal peace through sea and land.

IV

No war, or battle's sound,
Was heard the world around:
The idle spear and shield were high uphung;
The hooked chariot stood
Unstain'd with hostile blood;
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng;
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

V

But peaceful was the night,
Wherein the Prince of light
His reign of Peace upon the earth began.

The winds, with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kist,
Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

VI

The stars, with deep amaze,
Stand fix'd in stedfast gaze,
Bending one way their precious influence:
And will not take their flight,
For all the morning light,
Or Lucifer that often warn'd them thence;
But in their glimmering orbs did glow,
Until their Lord himself bespake, and bid them go.

VII

And, though the shady gloom
Had given day her room,
The sun himself withheld his wonted speed,
And hid his head for shame,
As his inferiour flame
The new-enlighten'd world no more should need;
He saw a greater sun appear
Than his bright throne, or burning axle-tree, could bear.

VIII

The shepherds on the lawn,
Or ere the point of dawn,
Sat simply chatting in a rustick row;

Full little thought they than
That the mighty Pan
Was kindly come to live with them below;
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep

IX

When such musick sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet,
As never was by mortal finger strook;
Divinely-warbled voice
Answering the stringed noise,
As all their souls in blissful rapture took:
The air, such pleasure loth to lose,
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close.

X

Nature that heard such sound,
Beneath the hollow round
Of Cynthia's seat, the aery region thrilling,
Now was almost won
To think her part was done,
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling;
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all Heaven and Earth in happier union.

XI

At last surrounds their sight
A globe of circular light,
That with long beams the shamefac'd night array'd;

The helmed Cherubim,
And sworded Seraphim,
Are seen in glittering ranks with wings display'd,
Harping in loud and solemn quire,
With unexpressive notes, to Heaven's new-born Heir.

XII

Such musick (as 'tis said)
Before was never made,
But when of old the sons of morning sung,
While the Creator Great
His constellations set,
And the well-balanc'd world on hinges hung;
And cast the dark foundations deep,
And bid the weltering waves their oozy channel keep.

XIII

Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears,
If ye have power to touch our senses so;
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time,
And let the base of Heaven's deep organ blow;
And, with your nine-fold harmony,
Make up full consort to the angelick symphony.

XIV

For, if such holy song
Inwrap our fancy long,
Time will run back, and fetch the age of gold;

And speckled Vanity
Will sicken soon and die,
And leprous Sin will melt from earthly mould;
And Hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day.

XV

Yea, Truth and Justice then
Will down return to men,
Orb'd in a rainbow; and, like glories wearing,
Mercy will sit between,
Thron'd in celestial sheen,
With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering;
And Heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace hall.

XVI

But wisest Fate says no,
This must not yet be so,
The Babe yet lies in smiling infancy,
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss;
So both himself and us to glorify:
Yet first, to those ychain'd in sleep,
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the deep.

XVII

With such a horrid clang
As on mount Sinai rang,
While the red fire and smouldering clouds out brake:

The aged earth aghast,
With terrour of that blast,
  Shall from the surface to the center shake;
When, at the world's last session,
The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread his throne.

XVIII

And then at last our bliss
Full and perfect is,
  But now begins; for, from this happy day,
The old Dragon, under ground
In straiter limits bound,
  Not half so far casts his usurped sway;
And, wroth to see his kingdom fail,
Swindges the scaly horrour of his folded tail.

XIX

The oracles are dumb,
No voice or hideous hum
  Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving.
Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
  With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
No nightly trance, or breathed spell,
Inspires the pale-ey'd priest from the prophetick cell.

XX

The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,
  A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;

From haunted spring and dale,
Edg'd with poplar pale,
The parting Genius is with sighing sent;
With flower-inwoven tresses torn
The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

XXI

In consecrated earth,
And on the holy hearth,
The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint;
In urns, and altars round.
A drear and dying sound
Affrights the Flamens at their service quaint;
And the chill marble seems to sweat,
While each peculiar Power foregoes his wonted seat.

XXII

Peor and Baälim
Forsake their temples dim,
With that twice-batter'd God of Palestine;
And mooned Ashtaroth,
Heaven's queen and mother both,
Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine;
The Libyck Hammon shrinks his horn,
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz mourn.

XXIII

And sullen Moloch, fled,
Hath left in shadows dread

His burning idol all of blackest hue;
In vain with cymbals' ring
They call the grisly king,
In dismal dance about the furnace blue:
The brutish gods of Nile as fast,
Isis, and Orus, and the dog Anubis, haste.

XXIV

Nor is Osiris seen
In Memphian grove or green
Trampling the unshower'd grass with lowings loud:
Nor can he be at rest
Within his sacred chest;
Nought but profoundest hell can be his shroud;
In vain with timbrell'd anthems dark
The sable-stoled sorcerers bear his worshipt ark.

XXV

He feels from Juda's land
The dreaded Infant's hand,
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyn;
Nor all the gods beside
Longer dare abide,
Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine:
Our Babe, to show his Godhead true,
Can in his swaddling bands controul the damned crew.

XXVI

So, when the sun in bed,
Curtain'd with cloudy red,

Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,
The flocking shadows pale
Troop to the infernal jail,
Each fetter'd ghost slips to his several grave.
And the yellow-skirted Fayes
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-lov'd maze.

XXVII

But see, the Virgin blest
Hath laid her Babe to rest;
Time is our tedious song should here have ending;
Heaven's youngest-teemed star
Hath fix'd her polish'd car,
Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending:
And all about the courtly stable
Bright-harness'd Angels sit in order serviceable.

UPON THE CIRCUMCISION

Ye flaming Powers, and winged Warriours bright,
That erst with musick, and triumphant song,
First heard by happy watchful shepherds' ear,
So sweetly sung your joy the clouds along
Through the soft silence of the listening night;
Now mourn; and, if sad share with us to bear
Your fiery essence can distil no tear,
Burn in your sighs, and borrow
Seas wept from our deep sorrow:
He, who with all Heaven's heraldry whilere
Enter'd the world, now bleeds to give us ease;
Alas, how soon our sin
  Sore doth begin
    His infancy to seize!

O more exceeding love, or law more just?
Just law indeed, but more exceeding love!
For we, by rightful doom remediless,
Were lost in death, till he that dwelt above
High-thron'd in secret bliss, for us frail dust
Emptied his glory, even to nakedness;
And that great covenant which we still transgress
Entirely satisfied;
And the full wrath beside

Of vengeful justice bore for our excess;
And seals obedience first, with wounding smart.
This day; but O! ere long,
Huge pangs and strong
Will pierce more near his heart.

THE PASSION

I

EREWHILE of musick, and ethereal mirth,
Wherewith the stage of air and earth did ring,
And joyous news of heavenly Infant's birth,
My Muse with Angels did divide to sing;
But headlong joy is ever on the wing,
  In wintry solstice like the shorten'd light,
Soon swallow'd up in dark and long out-living night.

II

For now to sorrow must I tune my song,
And set my harp to notes of saddest woe,
Which on our dearest Lord did seize ere long,
Dangers, and snares, and wrongs, and worse than so,
Which he for us did freely undergo:
  Most perfect Hero, tried in heaviest plight
Of labours huge and hard, too hard for human wight!

III

He, sovran priest, stooping his regal head,
That dropt with odorous oil down his fair eyes,
Poor fleshy tabernacle entered,
His starry front low-rooft beneath the skies:

O, what a mask was there, what a disguise!
Yet more; the stroke of death he must abide,
Then lies him meekly down fast by his brethren's side.

IV

These latest scenes confine my roving verse;
To this horizon is my Phœbus bound:
His Godlike acts, and his temptations fierce,
And former sufferings, otherwhere are found;
Loud o'er the rest Cremona's trump doth sound;
Me softer airs befit, and softer strings
Of lute, or viol still, more apt for mournful things.

V

Befriend me, Night, best patroness of grief;
Over the pole thy thickest mantle throw,
And work my flatter'd fancy to belief
That Heaven and Earth are colour'd with my woe;
My sorrows are too dark for day to know:
The leaves should all be black whereon I write,
And letters, where my tears have wash'd, a wannish white.

VI

See, see the chariot, and those rushing wheels,
That whirl'd the Prophet up at Chebar flood;
My spirit some transporting Cherub feels
To bear me where the towers of Salem stood,
Once glorious towers, now sunk in guiltless blood;
There doth my soul in holy vision sit,
In pensive trance, and anguish, and ecstatick fit.

VII

Mine eye hath found that sad sepulchral rock
That was the casket of Heaven's richest store,
And here, though grief my feeble hands uplock,
Yet on the soften'd quarry would I score
My plaining verse as lively as before;
For sure so well instructed are my tears,
That they would fitly fall in order'd characters.

VIII

Or, should I thence hurried on viewless wing
Take up a weeping on the mountains wild,
The gentle neighbourhood of grove and spring
Would soon unbosom all their echoes mild;
And I (for grief is easily beguil'd)
Might think the infection of my sorrows loud
Had got a race of mourners on some pregnant cloud.

This subject the Author finding to be above the years he had, when he wrote it, and nothing satisfied with what was begun, left it unfinished.

ON TIME

Fly, envious Time, till thou run out thy race;
Call on the lazy leaden-stepping hours,
Whose speed is but the heavy plummet's pace;
And glut thyself with what thy womb devours,
Which is no more than what is false and vain,
And merely mortal dross;
So little is our loss,
So little is thy gain.
For when as each thing bad thou hast entomb'd,
And last of all thy greedy self consum'd,
Then long Eternity shall greet our bliss
With an individual kiss;
And Joy shall overtake us as a flood,
When every thing that is sincerely good
And perfectly divine,
With Truth, and Peace, and Love, shall ever shine
About the supreme throne
Of Him, to whose happy-making sight alone
When once our heavenly-guided soul shall climb;
Then, all this earthy grossness quit,
Attir'd with stars, we shall for ever sit,
Triumphing over Death, and Chance, and thee,
O Time.

AT A SOLEMN MUSICK

Blest pair of Syrens, pledges of Heaven's joy,
Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,
Wed your divine sounds, and mix'd power employ
Dead things with inbreath'd sense able to pierce;
And to our high-rais'd phantasy present
That undisturbed song of pure concent,
Aye sung before the sapphire-colour'd throne
To Him that sits thereon,
With saintly shout, and solemn jubilee;
Where the bright Seraphim, in burning row,
Their loud up-lifted angel trumpets blow;
And the Cherubick host, in thousand quires,
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,
With those just Spirits that wear victorious palms,
Hymns devout and holy psalms
Singing everlastingly:
That we on earth, with undiscording voice,
May rightly answer that melodious noise;
As once we did, till disproportion'd sin
Jarr'd against Nature's chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair musick that all creatures made
To their great Lord, whose love their motion sway'd
In perfect diapason, whilst they stood
In first obedience, and their state of good.

O may we soon again renew that song,
And keep in tune with Heaven, till God ere long
To his celestial consort us unite,
To live with Him, and sing in endless morn of light!

SONG ON MAY MORNING

Now the bright Morning-star, day's harbinger,
Comes dancing from the east, and leads with her
The flowery May, who from her green lap throws
The yellow cowslip and the pale primrose.
  Hail, bounteous May, that dost inspire
  Mirth, and youth, and warm desire;
  Woods and groves are of thy dressing,
  Hill and dale doth boast thy blessing.
Thus we salute thee with our early song,
And welcome thee, and wish thee long.

AN EPITAPH ON THE ADMIRABLE DRAMATICK POET, W. SHAKSPEARE

WHAT needs my Shakspeare for his honour'd bones
The labour of an age in piled stones?
Or that his hallow'd reliques should be hid
Under a star-ypointing pyramid?
Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou, in our wonder and astonishment,
Hast built thy self a live-long monument.
For whilst, to the shame of slow-endeavouring art,
Thy easy numbers flow; and that each heart
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book
Those Delphick lines with deep impression took;
Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,
Dost make us marble with too much conceiving;
And, so sepulcher'd in such pomp dost lie,
That kings, for such a tomb, would wish to die.

ON THE UNIVERSITY CARRIER

WHO SICKENED IN THE TIME OF HIS VACANCY, BEING FORBID TO GO TO LONDON, BY REASON OF THE PLAGUE.

HERE lies old Hobson; Death hath broke his girt,
And here, alas! hath laid him in the dirt;
Or else the ways being foul, twenty to one,
He's here stuck in a slough, and overthrown.
'Twas such a shifter, that, if truth were known,
Death was half glad when he had got him down;
For he had, any time this ten years full,
Dodg'd with him betwixt Cambridge and *The Bull*.
And surely Death could never have prevail'd,
Had not his weekly course of carriage fail'd;
But lately finding him so long at home,
And thinking now his journey's end was come,
And that he had ta'en up his latest inn,
In the kind office of a chamberlin
Show'd him his room where he must lodge that night,
Pull'd off his boots, and took away the light:
If any ask for him, it shall be sed,
"Hobson has supt, and's newly gone to bed."

ANOTHER ON THE SAME

HERE lieth one who did most truly prove
That he could never die while he could move;
So hung his destiny, never to rot
While he might still jog on and keep his trot,
Made of sphere-metal, never to decay
Until his revolution was at stay.
Time numbers motion, yet (without a crime
'Gainst old truth) motion number'd out his time:
And, like an engine, mov'd with wheel and weight,
His principles being ceas'd, he ended straight.
Rest, that gives all men life, gave him his death,
And too much breathing put him out of breath;
Nor were it contradiction to affirm,
Too long vacation hasten'd on his term.
Merely to drive the time away he sicken'd,
Fainted, and died, nor would with ale be quicken'd;
"Nay," quoth he, on his swooning bed outstretch'd,
"If I mayn't carry, sure I'll ne'er be fetch'd,
But vow, though the cross doctors all stood hearers,
For one carrier put down to make six bearers."
Ease was his chief disease; and, to judge right,
He died for heaviness that his cart went light:
His leisure told him that his time was come,
And lack of load made his life burdensome,
That even to his last breath, (there be that say't,)
As he were press'd to death, he cried, More weight;

But, had his doings lasted as they were,
He had been an immortal carrier.
Obedient to the moon he spent his date
In course reciprocal, and had his fate
Link'd to the mutual flowing of the seas,
Yet (strange to think) his *wain* was his *encrease.*
His letters are deliver'd all and gone,
Only remains this superscription.

AN EPITAPH ON THE MARCHIONESS OF WINCHESTER

THIS rich marble doth inter
The honour'd wife of Winchester,
A Viscount's daughter, an Earl's heir,
Besides what her virtues fair
Added to her noble birth,
More than she could own from earth.
Summers three times eight save one
She had told; alas! too soon,
After so short time of breath,
To house with darkness, and with death.
Yet had the number of her days
Been as complete as was her praise,
Nature and Fate had had no strife
In giving limit to her life.
  Her high birth, and her graces sweet,
Quickly found a lover meet;
The virgin quire for her request
The god that sits at marriage feast;
He at their invoking came,
But with a scarce well-lighted flame;
And in his garland, as he stood,
Ye might discern a cypress bud.
Once had the early matrons run

To greet her of a lovely son,
And now with second hope she goes,
And calls Lucina to her throes;
But, whether by mischance or blame,
Atropos for Lucina came,
And with remorseless cruelty
Spoil'd at once both fruit and tree:
The hapless babe, before his birth,
Had burial, yet not laid in earth;
And the languish'd mother's womb
Was not long a living tomb.

So have I seen some tender slip,
Sav'd with care from winter's nip,
The pride of her carnation train,
Pluck'd up by some unheedy swain,
Who only thought to crop the flower
New shot up from vernal shower;
But the fair blossom hangs the head
Side-ways, as on a dying bed,
And those pearls of dew, she wears,
Prove to be presaging tears,
Which the sad morn had let fall
On her hastening funeral.

Gentle Lady, may thy grave
Peace and quiet ever have;
After this thy travel sore
Sweet rest seize thee evermore,
That, to give the world encrease,
Shorten'd hast thy own life's lease.
Here, besides the sorrowing
That thy noble house doth bring,

Here be tears of perfect moan
Wept for thee in Helicon;
And some flowers, and some bays,
For thy herse, to strew the ways,
Sent thee from the banks of Came,
Devoted to thy virtuous name;
Whilst thou, bright Saint, high sitst in glory,
Next her, much like to thee in story,
That fair Syrian shepherdess,
Who, after years of barrenness,
The highly-favour'd Joseph bore
To him that serv'd for her before,
And at her next birth, much like thee,
Through pangs fled to felicity,
Far within the bosom bright
Of blazing Majesty and Light:
There with thee, new welcome Saint,
Like fortunes may her soul acquaint,
With thee there clad in radiant sheen,
No Marchioness, but now a Queen.

L'ALLEGRO

HENCE, loathed Melancholy,
Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born,
In Stygian cave forlorn,
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy!
Find out some uncouth cell,
Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous wings,
And the night-raven sings;
There under ebon shades, and low-brow'd rocks,
As ragged as thy locks,
In dark Cimmerian desart ever dwell.
But come, thou goddess fair and free
In Heaven yclep'd Euphrosyne,
And by Men heart-easing Mirth;
Whom lovely Venus, at a birth,
With two sister Graces more,
To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore:
Or whether (as some sager sing)
The frolick wind that breathes the spring,
Zephyr, with Aurora playing,
As he met her once a-Maying;
There on beds of violets blue,
And fresh-blown roses wash'd in dew,
Fill'd her with thee a daughter fair,

So buxom, blithe, and debonair.
Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest, and youthful Jollity,
Quips, and Cranks, and wanton Wiles,
Nods, and Becks, and wreathed Smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.
Come, and trip it as ye go
On the light fantastick toe;
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty;
And, if I give thee honour due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreproved pleasures free;
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And singing startle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
Then to come, in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good-morrow,
Through the sweet-briar, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine:
While the cock, with lively din,
Scatters the rear of Darkness thin;
And to the stack, or the barn-door,
Stoutly struts his dames before:
Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,

From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill:
Sometime walking, not unseen,
By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate,
Where the great sun begins his state,
Robed in flames, and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight;
While the plowman, near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrow'd land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his sithe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
Whilst the landskip round it measures;
Russet lawns, and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
Mountains, on whose barren breast
The labouring clouds do often rest;
Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide:
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosom'd high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some Beauty lies,
The Cynosure of neighbouring eyes.
Hard by, a cottage chimney smoaks,
From betwixt two aged oaks,
Where Corydon and Thyrsis, met,
Are at their savoury dinner set
Of herbs, and other country messes,

Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses;
And then in haste the bower she leaves,
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;
Or, if the earlier season lead,
To the tann'd haycock in the mead.
Sometimes with secure delight
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks sound
To many a youth, and many a maid,
Dancing in the chequer'd shade;
And young and old come forth to play
On a sun-shine holy-day,
Till the live-long day-light fail:
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,
With stories told of many a feat,
How faery Mab the junkets eat;
She was pinch'd, and pull'd, she sed;
And he, by friars' lantern led,
Tells how the drudging Goblin swet,
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath thresh'd the corn,
That ten days labourers could not end;
Then lies him down the lubbar fiend,
And, stretch'd out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength;
And crop-full out of doors he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin rings.
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,
By whispering winds soon lull'd asleep.

Towred cities please us then,
And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of knights and barons bold,
In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold,
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize
Of wit, or arms, while both contend
To win her grace, whom all commend.
There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With masque, and antique pageantry;
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream.
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakspeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.
And ever, against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
Married to immortal verse;
Such as the meeting soul may pierce,
In notes, with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out,
With wanton heed and giddy cunning;
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony;
That Orpheus' self may heave his head
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heap'd Elysian flowers, and hear

Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto, to have quite set free
His half-regain'd Eurydice.
These delights if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

IL PENSEROSO

HENCE, vain deluding Joys,
The brood of Folly without father bred!
How little you bested,
Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys!
Dwell in some idle brain,
And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
As thick and numberless
As the gay motes that people the sunbeams;
Or likest hovering dreams,
The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.
But hail, thou goddess, sage and holy,
Hail, divinest Melancholy!
Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight,
And therefore to our weaker view
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue;
Black, but such as in esteem
Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,
Or that starr'd Ethiop queen that strove
To set her beauty's praise above
The Sea-Nymphs, and their powers offended:
Yet thou art higher far descended:
Thee bright-hair'd Vesta, long of yore,
To solitary Saturn bore;

His daughter she; in Saturn's reign,
Such mixture was not held a stain:
Oft in glimmering bowers and glades
He met her, and in secret shades
Of woody Ida's inmost grove,
Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove.
Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,
Sober, stedfast, and demure,
All in a robe of darkest grain,
Flowing with majestick train,
And sable stole of cypress lawn,
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.
Come, but keep thy wonted state,
With even step, and musing gait;
And looks commércing with the skies,
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:
There, held in holy passion still,
Forget thyself to marble, till
With a sad leaden downward cast
Thou fix them on the earth as fast:
And join with thee calm Peace, and Quiet,
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,
And hears the Muses in a ring
Aye round about Jove's altar sing:
And add to these retired Leisure,
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure:
But first and chiefest with thee bring,
Him that yon soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,
The Cherub Contemplation;
And the mute Silence hist along,

'Less Philomel will deign a song,
In her sweetest saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of night,
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke,
Gently o'er the accustom'd oak:
Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among,
I woo, to hear thy even-song;
And, missing thee, I walk unseen
On the dry smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wandering moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray
Through the heaven's wide pathless way;
And oft, as if her head she bow'd,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft, on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off Curfeu sound,
Over some wide-water'd shore,
Swinging slow with sullen roar:
Or, if the air will not permit,
Some still removed place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom;
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowsy charm,
To bless the doors from nightly harm.
Or let my lamp at midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely tower,

Where I may oft out-watch the Bear,
With thrice-great Hermes, or unsphere
The spirit of Plato, to unfold
What worlds or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind, that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook:
And of those demons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or under ground,
Whose power hath a true consent
With planet, or with element.
Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
In sceptr'd pall come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine,
Or what (though rare) of later age
Ennobled hath the buskin'd stage.
But, O sad Virgin, that thy power
Might raise Musæus from his bower!
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes, as, warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what love did seek!
Or call up him that left half-told
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
And who had Canace to wife,
That own'd the virtuous ring and glass;
And of the wondrous horse of brass
On which the Tartar king did ride;
And if aught else great bards beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,

Of turneys, and of trophies hung,
Of forests, and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear.
Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,
Till civil-suited Morn appear,
Not trick'd and frounc'd, as she was wont
With the Attick boy to hunt,
But kercheft in a comely cloud,
While rocking winds are piping loud,
Or usher'd with a shower still,
When the gust hath blown his fill,
Ending on the rustling leaves,
With minute drops from off the eaves.
And when the sun begins to fling
His flaring beams, me, goddess, bring
To arched walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown that Sylvan loves,
Or pine, or monumental oak,
Where the rude axe, with heaved stroke,
Was never heard the Nymphs to daunt,
Or fright them from their hallow'd haunt.
There in close covert by some brook,
Where no profaner eye may look,
Hide me from day's garish eye,
While the bee with honied thigh,
That at her flowery work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring,
With such consort as they keep,
Entice the dewy-feather'd Sleep;
And let some strange mysterious Dream
Wave at his wings in aery stream

Of lively portraiture display'd,
Softly on my eye-lids laid.
And, as I wake, sweet musick breathe
Above, about, or underneath,
Sent by some Spirit to mortals good,
Or the unseen Genius of the wood.
But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloysters pale,
And love the high-embowed roof,
With antick pillars massy proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light:
There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voic'd quire below,
In service high, and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all heaven before mine eyes.
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that heaven doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew;
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetick strain.
These pleasures, Melancholy, give,
And I with thee will choose to live.

ARCADES

Part of an Entertainment presented to the Countess Dowager of Derby at Harefield, by some Noble Persons of her Family; who appear on the Scene in pastoral habit, moving toward the seat of state, with this Song:

I. SONG

Look, Nymphs and Shepherds, look,
What sudden blaze of majesty
Is that which we from hence descry,
Too divine to be mistook:
This, this is she
To whom our vows and wishes bend;
Here our solemn search hath end.
Fame, that, her high worth to raise,
Seem'd erst so lavish and profuse,
We may justly now accuse
Of detraction from her praise:
Less than half we find exprest,
Envy bid conceal the rest.

Mark, what radiant state she spreads,
In circle round her shining throne,
Shooting her beams like silver threads;
This, this is she alone,

Sitting like a goddess bright,
In the center of her light.
Might she the wise Latona be,
Or the towred Cybele
Mother of a hundred gods?
Juno dares not give her odds:
Who had thought this clime had held
A deity so unparallel'd?

As they come forward, THE GENIUS OF THE WOOD *appears, and, turning toward them, speaks.*

Gen. Stay, gentle Swains; for, though in this disguise,
I see bright honour sparkle through your eyes;
Of famous Arcady ye are, and sprung
Of that renowned flood, so often sung,
Divine Alphéus, who by secret sluice
Stole under seas to meet his Arethuse;
And ye, the breathing roses of the wood,
Fair silver-buskin'd Nymphs, as great and good;
I know, this quest of yours, and free intent,
Was all in honour and devotion meant
To the great mistress of yon princely shrine,
Whom with low reverence I adore as mine;
And, with all helpful service, will comply
To further this night's glad solemnity;
And lead ye, where ye may more near behold
What shallow-searching Fame hath left untold;
Which I full oft, amidst these shades alone,
Have sat to wonder at, and gaze upon:
For know, by lot from Jove I am the Power

Of this fair wood, and live in oaken bower,
To nurse the saplings tall, and curl the grove
With ringlets quaint, and wanton windings wove.
And all my plants I save from nightly ill
Of noisome winds, and blasting vapours chill:
And from the boughs brush off the evil dew,
And heal the harms of thwarting thunder blue,
Or what the cross dire-looking planet smites,
Or hurtful worm with canker'd venom bites.
When evening gray doth rise, I fetch my round
Over the mount, and all this hallow'd ground;
And early, ere the odorous breath of morn
Awakes the slumbering leaves, or tassell'd horn
Shakes the high thicket, haste I all about,
Number my ranks, and visit every sprout
With puissant words, and murmurs made to bless.
But else in deep of night, when drowsiness
Hath lock'd up mortal sense, then listen I
To the celestial Syrens' harmony,
That sit upon the nine infolded spheres,
And sing to those that hold the vital shears,
And turn the adamantine spindle round,
On which the fate of gods and men is wound.
Such sweet compulsion doth in musick lie,
To lull the daughters of Necessity,
And keep unsteady Nature to her law,
And the low world in measur'd motion draw
After the heavenly tune, which none can hear
Of human mould, with gross unpurged ear;
And yet such musick worthiest were to blaze
The peerless highth of her immortal praise,

Whose lustre leads us, and for her most fit,
If my inferior hand or voice could hit
Inimitable sounds. Yet, as we go,
Whate'er the skill of lesser gods can show,
I will assay, her worth to celebrate,
And so attend ye toward her glittering state;
Where ye may all, that are of noble stem,
Approach, and kiss her sacred vesture's hem.

II. SONG

O'er the smooth enamell'd green,
Where no print of step hath been,
  Follow me, as I sing
  And touch the warbled string.
Under the shady roof
Of branching elm star-proof,
    Follow me;
I will bring you where she sits,
Clad in splendour as befits
    Her deity.
Such a rural Queen
All Arcadia hath not seen.

III. SONG

Nymphs and Shepherds, dance no more
  By sandy Ladon's lilied banks;
On old Lycæus, or Cyllene hoar,
  Trip no more in twilight ranks;
Though Erymanth your loss deplore,
  A better soil shall give ye thanks.

From the stony Mænalus
Bring your flocks, and live with us;
Here ye shall have greater grace,
To serve the Lady of this place.
Though Syrinx your Pan's mistress were,
Yet Syrinx well might wait on her.
Such a rural Queen
All Arcadia hath not seen.

COMUS

A MASK PRESENTED AT LUDLOW CASTLE, 1634 BEFORE JOHN, EARL OF BRIDGEWATER, THEN PRESIDENT OF WALES.

To the Right Honourable John Lord Viscount Bracly, son and heir apparent to the Earl of Bridgewater, etc.

My Lord,—This poem, which received its first occasion of birth from yourself and others of your noble family, and much honour from your own person in the performance, now returns again to make a finall dedication of itself to you. Although not openly acknowledged by the author, yet it is a legitimate off-spring, so lovely, and so much desired, that the often copying of it hath tired my pen to give my severall friends satisfaction, and brought me to a necessity of producing it to the publike view; and now to offer it up in all rightfull devotion to those fair hopes, and rare endowments of your much promising youth, which give a full assurance, to all that know you, of a future excellence. Live, sweet Lord, to be the honour of your name, and receive this as your own, from the hands

of him, who hath by many favours been long obliged to your most honoured parents, and, as in this representation your attendant *Thyrsis*, so now in all reall expression—Your faithfull and most humble Servant H. LAWES.

THE PERSONS

THE ATTENDANT SPIRIT, afterwards in the habit of THYRSIS.
COMUS, with his Crew.
THE LADY.
FIRST BROTHER.
SECOND BROTHER.
SABRINA, the Nymph.

The Chief Persons who presented were :—

The Lord Brackley ;
Mr Thomas Egerton, his Brother ;
The Lady Alice Egerton.

THE MASK

The first Scene discovers a wild wood.

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT *descends or enters.*

BEFORE the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aereal spirits live inspher'd
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,
Which men call Earth; and, with low-thoughted care,
Confin'd and pester'd in this pinfold here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown that Virtue gives,
After this mortal change, to her true servants,
Amongst the enthron'd gods on sainted seats.
Yet some there be, that by due steps aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key
That opes the palace of Eternity:
To such my errand is; and, but for such,
I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds
With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.
But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway
Of every salt flood, and each ebbing stream,
Took in by lot 'twixt high and nether Jove
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles,

That like to rich and various gems inlay
The unadorned bosom of the deep:
Which he, to grace his tributary gods,
By course commits to several government,
And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns,
And wield their little tridents: But this Isle,
The greatest and the best of all the main,
He quarters to his blue-hair'd deities;
And all this tract that fronts the falling sun
A noble Peer of mickle trust and power
Has in his charge, with temper'd awe to guide
An old and haughty nation, proud in arms:
Where his fair off-spring, nursed in princely lore,
Are coming to attend their father's state,
And new-entrusted sceptre; but their way
Lies through the perplex'd paths of this drear
wood,
The nodding horrour of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger;
And here their tender age might suffer peril,
But that by quick command from sovran Jove
I was dispatch'd for their defence and guard:
And listen why; for I will tell you now
What never yet was heard in tale or song,
From old or modern bard, in hall or bower.
Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape
Crush'd the sweet poison of misused wine,
After the Tuscan mariners transform'd,
Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,
On Circe's island fell: (Who knows not Circe,
The daughter of the Sun, whose charmed cup

Whoever tasted lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a grovelling swine?)
This Nymph, that gaz'd upon his clustering locks
With ivy berries wreath'd, and his blithe youth,
Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son
Much like his father, but his mother more,
Whom therefore she brought up, and Comus nam'd:
Who, ripe and frolick of his full-grown age,
Roving the Celtick and Iberian fields,
At last betakes him to this ominous wood;
And, in thick shelter of black shades imbower'd,
Excels his mother at her mighty art,
Offering to every weary traveller
His orient liquor in a crystal glass,
To quench the drouth of Phœbus; which as they taste,
(For most do taste through fond intemperate thirst,)
Soon as the potion works, their human countenance,
The express resemblance of the gods, is chang'd
Into some brutish form of wolf, or bear;
Or ounce, or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,
All other parts remaining as they were;
And they, so perfect is their misery,
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely than before;
And all their friends and native home forget,
To roll with pleasure in a sensual stye.
Therefore when any, favour'd of high Jove,
Chances to pass through this adventurous glade,
Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star

I shoot from heaven, to give him safe convoy,
As now I do: But first I must put off
These my sky-robes spun out of Iris' woof
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain
That to the service of this house belongs,
Who with his soft pipe, and smooth-dittied song,
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,
And hush the waving woods; nor of less faith,
And in this office of his mountain watch
Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid
Of this occasion. But I hear the tread
Of hateful steps: I must be viewless now.

COMUS *enters, with a charming rod in one hand, his glass in the other; with him a rout of monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their apparel glistering. They come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands.*

Comus. The star, that bids the shepherd fold,
Now the top of heaven doth hold;
And the gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay
In the steep Atlantick stream;
And the slope sun his upward beam
Shoots against the dusky pole,
Pacing toward the other goal
Of his chamber in the East.
Meanwhile, welcome Joy and Feast,
Midnight Shout and Revelry,

Tipsy Dance and Jollity.
Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odours, dropping wine.
Rigour now is gone to bed,
And Advice with scrupulous head.
Strict Age, and sour Severity,
With their grave saws, in slumber lie.
We, that are of purer fire,
Imitate the starry quire,
Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;
And, on the tawny sands and shelves,
Trip the pert faeries and the dapper elves.
By dimpled brook and fountain-brim
The Wood-Nymphs, deck'd with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep;
What hath Night to do with Sleep?
Night hath better sweets to prove;
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
Come, let us our rites begin;
'Tis only day-light that makes sin,
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.—
Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veil'd Cotytto! to whom the secret flame
Of midnight torches burns; mysterious dame,
That ne'er art call'd but when the dragon woom
Of Stygian darkness spets her thickest gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air;
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,

Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat', and befriend
Us thy vow'd priests, till utmost end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out,
Ere the blabbing eastern scout,
The nice Morn on the Indian steep
From her cabin'd loop-hole peep,
And to the tell-tale Sun descry
Our conceal'd solemnity.—
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground,
In a light fantastick round.

The Measure.

Break off, break off, I feel the different pace
Of some chaste footing near about this ground.
Run to your shrouds, within these brakes and trees;
Our number may affright: Some virgin sure
(For so I can distinguish by mine art)
Benighted in these woods. Now to my charms,
And to my wily trains; I shall ere long
Be well-stock'd with as fair a herd as graz'd
About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl
My dazzling spells into the spungy air,
Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion,
And give it false presentments, lest the place
And my quaint habits breed astonishment,
And put the damsel to suspicious flight;
Which must not be, for that's against my course:
I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well-plac'd words of glozing courtesy
Baited with reasons not unplausible,

Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares. When once her eye
Hath met the virtue of this magick dust
I shall appear some harmless villager,
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.
But here she comes; I fairly step aside,
And hearken, if I may, her business here.

The LADY *enters.*

This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,
My best guide now: Methought it was the sound
Of riot and ill-manag'd merriment,
Such as the jocund flute, or gamesome pipe,
Stirs up among the loose unletter'd hinds;
When for their teeming flocks, and granges full,
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thank the gods amiss. I should be loth
To meet the rudeness, and swill'd insolence,
Of such late wassailers; yet O! where else
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?
My Brothers, when they saw me wearied out
With this long way, resolving here to lodge
Under the spreading favour of these pines,
Stept, as they said, to the next thicket-side
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit
As the kind hospitable woods provide.
They left me then, when the gray-hooded Even,
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain.

But where they are, and why they came not back,
Is now the labour of my thoughts; 'tis likeliest
They had engag'd their wandering steps too far;
And envious darkness, ere they could return,
Had stole them from me: else, O thievish Night,
Why should'st thou, but for some felonious end,
In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars,
That Nature hung in heaven, and fill'd their lamps
With everlasting oil, to give due light
To the misled and lonely traveller?
This is the place, as well as I may guess,
Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth
Was rife, and perfect in my listening ear;
Yet nought but single darkness do I find.
What might this be? A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
And aery tongues that syllable men's names
On sands, and shores, and desart wildernesses.
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion, Conscience.—
O welcome, pure-ey'd Faith; white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering Angel girt with golden wings;
And thou, unblemish'd form of Chastity!
I see ye visibly, and now believe
That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honour unassail'd
Was I deceiv'd, or did a sable cloud

Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not err, there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove:
I cannot halloo to my Brothers, but
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
I'll venture; for my new enliven'd spirits
Prompt me; and they perhaps are not far off.

Song.

Sweet Echo, sweetest Nymph, that liv'st unseen
Within thy aery shell,
By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroider'd vale,
Where the love-lorn nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well;

Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That likest thy Narcissus are?
O, if thou have
Hid them in some flowery cave,
Tell me but where,
Sweet queen of parley, daughter of the sphere!
So may'st thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all Heaven's harmonies

Enter Comus.

Com. Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,

And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence.
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven-down
Of darkness, till it smil'd! I have oft heard
My mother Circe with the Syrens three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs;
Who, as they sung, would take the prison'd soul,
And lap it in Elysium: Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmur'd soft applause:
Yet they in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense,
And in sweet madness robb'd it of itself;
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now.—I'll speak to her,
And she shall be my queen.—Hail, foreign wonder!
Whom certain these rough shades did never breed,
Unless the goddess that in rural shrine
Dwell'st here with Pan, or Sylvan; by blest song
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.

Lad. Nay, gentle shepherd, ill is lost that praise,
That is address'd to unattending ears;
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift
How to regain my sever'd company,
Compell'd me to awake the courteous Echo
To give me answer from her mossy couch.

Com. What chance, good Lady, hath bereft you thus?

Lad. Dim darkness, and this leafy labyrinth.

Com. Could that divide you from near-ushering guides?

Lad. They left me weary on a grassy turf.

Com. By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why?

Lad. To seek i' the valley some cool friendly spring.

Com. And left your fair side all unguarded, Lady?

Lad. They were but twain, and purpos'd quick return.

Com. Perhaps forestalling night prevented them.

Lad. How easy my misfortune is to hit!

Com. Imports their loss, beside the present need?

Lad. No less than if I should my Brothers lose.

Com. Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?

Lad. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazor'd lips.

Com. Two such I saw, what time the labour'd ox
In his loose traces from the furrow came,
And the swink'd hedger at his supper sat;
I saw them under a green mantling vine,
That crawls along the side of yon small hill,
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots;
Their port was more than human, as they stood:
I took it for a faery vision
Of some gay creatures of the element,
That in the colours of the rainbow live,
And play i' the plighted clouds. I was awe-strook,
And, as I past, I worshipt; if those you seek,

It were a journey like the path to Heaven,
To help you find them.
Lad. Gentle Villager,
What readiest way would bring me to that place?
Com. Due west it rises from this shrubby point.
Lad. To find out that, good Shepherd, I suppose,
In such a scant allowance of star-light,
Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,
Without the sure guess of well-practis'd feet.
Com. I know each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle, or bushy dell of this wild wood,
And every bosky bourn from side to side,
My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood;
And if your stray attendance be yet lodg'd,
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark
From her thatch'd pallet rouse; if otherwise,
I can conduct you, Lady, to a low
But loyal cottage, where you may be safe
Till further quest.
Lad. Shepherd, I take thy word,
And trust thy honest offer'd courtesy,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds
With smoky rafters, than in tap'stry halls
In courts of princes, where it first was nam'd,
And yet is most pretended: In a place
Less warranted than this, or less secure,
I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.—
Eye me, blest Providence, and square my trial
To my proportion'd strength!—Shepherd, lead on.
[*Exeunt.*

Enter the Two Brothers.

El. Br. Unmuffle, ye faint stars; and thou, fair moon,
That wont'st to love the traveller's benison,
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,
And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here
In double night of darkness and of shades;
Or, if your influence be quite damm'd up
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
Though a rush-candle from the wicker hole
Of some clay habitation, visit us
With thy long-levell'd rule of streaming light;
And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,
Or Tyrian Cynosure.

Sec. Br. Or, if our eyes
Be barr'd that happiness, might we but hear
The folded flocks penn'd in their wattled cotes,
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
Count the night watches to his feathery dames,
'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering,
In this close dungeon of innumerous boughs.
But, O that hapless virgin, our lost Sister!
Where may she wander now, whither betake her
From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles?
Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
Leans her unpillow'd head, fraught with sad fears.
What if in wild amazement and affright?

Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
Of savage hunger, or of savage heat?
El. Br. Peace, Brother; be not over-exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils:
For grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
What need a man forestall his date of grief,
And run to meet what he would most avoid?
Or if they be but false alarms of fear,
How bitter is such self-delusion!
I do not think my Sister so to seek,
Or so unprincipled in Virtue's book,
And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,
As that the single want of light and noise
(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not,)
Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,
And put them into misbecoming plight.
Virtue could see to do what Virtue would
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
Were in the flat sea sunk. And Wisdom's self
Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude;
Where, with her best nurse, Contemplation,
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all-to ruffled, and sometimes impair'd.
He that has light within his own clear breast,
May sit i' the center, and enjoy bright day:
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;
Himself is his own dungeon.
Sec. Br. 'Tis most true,
That musing Meditation most affects

The pensive secrecy of desart cell,
Far from the cheerful haunt of men and herds,
And sits as safe as in a senate-house;
For who would rob a hermit of his weeds,
His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,
Or do his gray hairs any violence?
But Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
Of dragon-watch with unenchanted eye,
To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit,
From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.
You may as well spread out the unsunn'd heaps
Of miser's treasure by an outlaw's den,
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope
Danger will wink on opportunity,
And let a single helpless maiden pass
Uninjur'd in this wild surrounding waste.
Of night, or loneliness, it recks me not;
I fear the dread events that dog them both,
Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person
Of our unowned Sister.

El. Br. I do not, Brother,
Infer, as if I thought my Sister's state
Secure, without all doubt or controversy;
Yet, where an equal poise of hope and fear
Does arbitrate the event, my nature is
That I incline to hope, rather than fear,
And gladly banish squint suspicion.
My Sister is not so defenceless left
As you imagine; she has a hidden strength,
Which you remember not.

Sec. Br. What hidden strength,
Unless the strength of Heaven, if you mean that?
El. Br. I mean that too, but yet a hidden strength,
Which, if Heaven gave it, may be term'd her own:
'Tis Chastity, my Brother, Chastity:
She that has that is clad in complete steel;
And, like a quiver'd Nymph with arrows keen,
May trace huge forests, and unharbour'd heaths,
Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds;
Where, through the sacred rays of Chastity,
No savage fierce, bandite, or mountaineer,
Will dare to soil her virgin purity:
Yea there, where very Desolation dwells,
By grots and caverns shagg'd with horrid shades,
She may pass on with unblench'd majesty,
Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.
Some say, no evil thing that walks by night
In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,
Blue meager hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost
That breaks his magick chains at Curfeu time
No goblin, or swart faery of the mine,
Hath hurtful power o'er true Virginity.
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece
To testify the arms of Chastity?
Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
Fair silver-shafted queen, for ever chaste,
Wherewith she tam'd the brinded lioness
And spotted mountain-pard, but set at nought
The frivolous bolt of Cupid; gods and men

Fear'd her stern frown, and she was queen o' the woods.
What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield,
That wise Minerva wore, unconquer'd virgin,
Wherewith she freez'd her foes to congeal'd stone,
But rigid looks of chaste austerity,
And noble grace, that dash'd brute violence
With sudden adoration and blank awe?
So dear to Heaven is saintly Chastity,
That when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried Angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,
And, in clear dream and solemn vision,
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear;
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
Till all be made immortal: But when Lust,
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp,
Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres
Lingering, and sitting by a new made grave,
As loth to leave the body that it lov'd,
And link'd itself by carnal sensuality
To a degenerate and degraded state.

Sec. Br. How charming is divine Philosophy!
Not harsh, and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.
El. Br. List, list; I hear
Some far-off halloo break the silent air.
Sec. Br. Methought so too; what should it be?
El. Br. For certain
Either some one like us night-founder'd here,
Or else some neighbour woodman, or, at worst,
Some roving robber, calling to his fellows.
Sec. Br. Heaven keep my sister! Again, again, and near!
Best draw, and stand upon our guard.
El. Br. I'll halloo;
If he be friendly, he comes well; if not,
Defence is a good cause, and Heaven be for us.

[*Enter the* ATTENDANT SPIRIT, *habited like a shepherd.*]

That halloo I should know; what are you? speak:
Come not too near, you fall on iron stakes else.
Spir. What voice is that? my young Lord? speak again.
Sec. Br. O Brother, 'tis my father's shepherd, sure.
El. Br. Thyrsis? Whose artful strains have oft delay'd
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,

And sweeten'd every musk-rose of the dale.
How cam'st thou here, good swain? hath any ram
Slipt from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,
Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook?
How could'st thou find this dark sequester'd nook?

Spir. O my lov'd master's heir, and his next joy,
I came not here on such a trivial toy
As a stray'd ewe, or to pursue the stealth
Of pilfering wolf; not all the fleecy wealth
That doth enrich these downs is worth a thought
To this my errand, and the care it brought
But, O my virgin Lady, where is she?
How chance she is not in your company?

El. Br. To tell thee sadly, Shepherd, without blame,
Or our neglect, we lost her as we came.

Spir. Ay me unhappy! then my fears are true.

El. Br. What fears, good Thyrsis? Pr'ythee briefly shew.

Spir. I'll tell ye; 'tis not vain or fabulous,
(Though so esteem'd by shallow ignorance,)
What the sage poets, taught by the heavenly Muse,
Storied of old, in high immortal verse,
Of dire chimeras, and enchanted isles,
And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to Hell;
For such there be; but unbelief is blind.
Within the navel of this hideous wood,
Immur'd in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwells,
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,
Deep skill'd in all his mother's witcheries;
And here to every thirsty wanderer

By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,
With many murmurs mix'd, whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage
Character'd in the face: This have I learnt
Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts,
That brow this bottom-glade; whence night by night
He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl,
Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey,
Doing abhorred rites to Hecate
In their obscured haunts of inmost bowers.
Yet have they many baits, and guileful spells,
To inveigle and invite the unwary sense
Of them that pass unweeting by the way.
This evening late, by then the chewing flocks
Had ta'en their supper on the savoury herb
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With flaunting honey-suckle, and began,
Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
Till fancy had her fill; but, ere a close,
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,
And fill'd the air with barbarous dissonance;
At which I ceas'd, and listen'd them a while,
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
Gave respite to the drowsy frighted steeds,
That draw the litter of close-curtain'd Sleep;

At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound
Rose like a steam of rich distill'd perfumes,
And stole upon the air, that even Silence
Was took ere she was ware, and wish'd she might
Deny her nature, and be never more,
Still to be so displac'd. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of Death: but, O! ere long,
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honour'd Lady, your dear Sister.
Amaz'd I stood, harrow'd with grief and fear,
And, O poor hapless nightingale, thought I,
How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare!
Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,
Through paths and turnings often trod by day;
Till, guided by mine ear, I found the place,
Where that damn'd wisard, hid in sly disguise,
(For so by certain signs I knew,) had met
Already, ere my best speed could prevent,
The aidless innocent Lady, his wish'd prey;
Who gently ask'd if he had seen such two,
Supposing him some neighbour villager.
Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guess'd
Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprung
Into swift flight, till I had found you here;
But further know I not.

Sec. Br. O night, and shades!
How are ye join'd with Hell in triple knot
Against the unarmed weakness of one virgin,
Alone, and helpless! Is this the confidence
You gave me, Brother?

El. Br. Yes, and keep it still;
Lean on it safely; not a period
Shall be unsaid for me: Against the threats
Of malice, or of sorcery, or that power
Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm;—
Virtue may be assail'd, but never hurt,
Surpriz'd by unjust force, but not enthrall'd;
Yea, even that, which mischief meant most harm,
Shall in the happy trial prove most glory:
But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness; when at last
Gather'd like scum, and settled to itself,
It shall be in eternal restless change
Self-fed, and self-consumed: If this fail,
The pillar'd firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble.—But come, let's on!
Against the opposing will and arm of Heaven
May never this just sword be lifted up!
But for that damn'd magician, let him be girt
With all the grisly legions that troop
Under the sooty flag of Acheron,
Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms
'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out,
And force him to return his purchase back,
Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
Curs'd as his life.

Spir. Alas! good vent'rous Youth,
I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise;
But here thy sword can do thee little stead;
Far other arms and other weapons must

Be those, that quell the might of hellish charms:
He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
And crumble all thy sinews.
El. Br. Why pr'ythee, Shepherd,
How durst thou then thyself approach so near,
As to make this relation?
Spir. Care, and utmost shifts,
How to secure the lady from surprisal,
Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad,
Of small regard to see to, yet well skill'd
In every virtuous plant, and healing herb,
That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray:
He lov'd me well, and oft would beg me sing;
Which when I did, he on the tender grass
Would sit, and hearken even to ecstasy,
And in requital ope his leathern scrip,
And show me simples of a thousand names,
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties:
Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he cull'd me out;
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,
But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil:
Unknown, and like esteem'd, and the dull swain
Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon:
And yet more med'cinal is it than that Moly
That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave;
He call'd it Hæmony, and gave it me,
And bade me keep it as of sovran use
'Gainst all enchantments, mildew blast, or damp,
Or ghastly furies' apparition.

I purs'd it up, but little reckoning made,
Till now that this extremity compell'd:
But now I find it true; for by this means
I knew the foul enchanter though disguis'd,
Enter'd the very lime-twigs of his spells,
And yet came off: If you have this about you,
(As I will give you when we go,) you may
Boldly assault the necromancer's hall;
Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood,
And brandish'd blade, rush on him; break his glass,
And shed the luscious liquour on the ground,
But seize his wand; though he and his curs'd crew
Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,
Or like the sons of Vulcan vomit smoke,
Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.
El. Br. Thyrsis, lead on apace, I'll follow thee;
And some good Angel bear a shield before us!

The Scene changes to a stately palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness: soft musick, tables spread with all dainties. COMUS *appears with his rabble, and* THE LADY *set in an enchanted chair, to whom he offers his glass, which she puts by, and goes about to rise.*

Com. Nay, Lady, sit; if I but wave this wand,
Your nerves are all chain'd up in alabaster,
And you a statue, or, as Daphne was,
Root-bound, that fled Apollo.
Lad. Fool, do not boast;
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind

With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
Thou hast immanacled while Heaven sees good.
Com. Why are you vex'd, Lady? Why do you frown?
Here dwell no frowns, nor anger; from these gates
Sorrow flies far: See, here be all the pleasures,
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose season.
And first, behold this cordial julep here,
That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,
With spirits of balm and fragrant syrops mix'd:
Not that Nepenthes, which the wife of Thone
In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena,
Is of such power to stir up joy as this,
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.
Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty limbs, which Nature lent
For gentle usage and soft delicacy?
But you invert the covenants of her trust,
And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,
With that which you receiv'd on other terms;
Scorning the unexempt condition,
By which all mortal frailty must subsist,
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,
That have been tired all day without repast,
And timely rest have wanted; but, fair Virgin,
This will restore all soon.
Lad. 'Twill not, false traitor!
'Twill not restore the truth and honesty
That thou hast banish'd from thy tongue with lies.

Was this the cottage, and the safe abode,
Thou toldst me of? What grim aspects are these,
These ugly-headed monsters? Mercy guard me!
Hence with thy brew'd enchantments, foul deceiver!
Hast thou betray'd my credulous innocence
With visor'd falsehood and base forgery?
And would'st thou seek again to trap me here
With lickerish baits, fit to ensnare a brute?
Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,
I would not taste thy treasonous offer; none
But such as are good men can give good things;
And that which is not good is not delicious
To a well-govern'd and wise appetite.

Com. O foolishness of men! that lend their ears
To those budge doctors of the Stoick fur,
And fetch their precepts from the Cynick tub,
Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence.
Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
But all to please and sate the curious taste?
And set to work millions of spinning worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-hair'd silk,
To deck her sons; and, that no corner might
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
She hutch'd the all-worshipt ore, and precious gems,
To store her children with: If all the world
Should in a pet of temperance feed on pulse,

Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but
frieze,
The All-giver would be unthank'd, would be un-
prais'd,
Not half his riches known, and yet despis'd:
And we should serve him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth,
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,
Who would be quite surcharg'd with her own
weight,
And strangled with her waste fertility;
The earth cumber'd, and the wing'd air dark'd with
plumes,
The herds would over-multitude their lords,
The sea o'erfraught would swell, and the unsought
diamonds
Would so imblaze the forehead of the deep,
And so bestud with stars, that they below
Would grow inur'd to light, and come at last
To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.
List, Lady; be not coy, and be not cosen'd
With that same vaunted name, Virginity.
Beauty is Nature's coin, must not be hoarded,
But must be current; and the good thereof
Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,
Unsavoury in the enjoyment of itself;
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
It withers on the stalk with languish'd head.
Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,
Where most may wonder at the workmanship;

It is for homely features to keep home,
They had their name thence; coarse complexions
And cheeks of sorry grain will serve to ply
The sampler, and to tease the huswife's wool.
What need a vermeil-tinctur'd lip for that,
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the Morn?
There was another meaning in these gifts;
Think what, and be advis'd; you are but young yet.

Lad. I had not thought to have unlock'd my lips
In this unhallow'd air, but that this juggler
Would think to charm my judgement, as mine eyes,
Obtruding false rules prank'd in reason's garb.
I hate when Vice can bolt her arguments,
And Virtue has no tongue to check her pride.—
Impostor! do not charge most innocent Nature,
As if she would her children should be riotous
With her abundance; she, good cateress,
Means her provision only to the good,
That live according to her sober laws,
And holy dictate of spare Temperance:
If every just man, that now pines with want,
Had but a moderate and beseeming share
Of that which lewdly-pamper'd Luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well dispens'd
In unsuperfluous even proportion,
And she no whit incumber'd with her store;
And then the Giver would be better thank'd,
His praise due paid: For swinish Gluttony
Ne'er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,

But with besotted base ingratitude
Crams, and blasphemes his Feeder. Shall I go on?
Or have I said enough? To him that dares
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words
Against the sun-clad Power of Chastity,
Fain would I something say, yet to what end?
Thou hast not ear, nor soul, to apprehend
The sublime notion, and high mystery
That must be utter'd to unfold the sage
And serious doctrine of Virginity;
And thou art worthy that thou should'st not know
More happiness than this thy present lot.
Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetorick,
That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence;
Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced:
Yet, should I try, the uncontrouled worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
That dumb things would be mov'd to sympathize,
And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and
shake,
Till all thy magick structures, rear'd so high,
Were shatter'd into heaps o'er thy false head.
Com. She fables not; I feel that I do fear
Her words set off by some superiour power;
And though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew
Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder, and the chains of Erebus,
To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,
And try her yet more strongly.—Come, no more;
This is mere moral babble, and direct'

Against the canon-laws of our foundation;
I must not suffer this; yet 'tis but the lees
And settlings of a melancholy blood:
But this will cure all straight; one sip of this
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight,
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.—

The BROTHERS *rush in with swords drawn, wrest his glass out of his hand, and break it against the ground; his rout make sign of resistance, but are all driven in. The* ATTENDANT SPIRIT *comes in.*

Spir. What, have you let the false enchanter 'scape?
O ye mistook, ye should have snatch'd his wand,
And bound him fast; without his rod revers'd,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the Lady that sits here
In stony fetters fix'd, and motionless:
Yet stay, be not disturb'd; now I bethink me,
Some other means I have which may be us'd,
Which once of Melibœus old I learnt,
The soothest shepherd that e'er piped on plains.
There is a gentle Nymph not far from hence,
That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream,
Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure;
Whilom she was the daughter of Locrine,
That had the scepter from his father Brute.
She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit

Of her enraged stepdame Guendolen,
Commended her fair innocence to the flood,
That staid her flight with his cross-flowing course.
The Water-Nymphs, that in the bottom play'd,
Held up their pearled wrists, and took her in,
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall;
Who, piteous of her woes, rear'd her lank head,
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe
In nectar'd lavers, strew'd with asphodel;
And through the porch and inlet of each sense
Dropt in ambrosial oils, till she reviv'd,
And underwent a quick immortal change,
Made Goddess of the river: still she retains
Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve
Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs
That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make,
Which she with precious vial'd liquours heals:
For which the shepherds at their festivals
Carol her goodness loud in rustick lays,
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffadils.
And, as the old swain said, she can unlock
The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,
If she be right invok'd in warbled song;
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift
To aid a virgin, such as was herself,
In hard-besetting need; this will I try,
And add the power of some adjuring verse.

Song

Sabrina fair,
  Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
  In twisted braids of lillies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;
  Listen for dear honour's sake,
  Goddess of the silver lake,
    Listen, and save.
Listen, and appear to us,
In name of great Oceanus;
By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,
And Tethys' grave majestick pace,
By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,
And the Carpathian wisard's hook,
By scaly Triton's winding shell,
And old sooth-saying Glaucus' spell,
By Leucothea's lovely hands,
And her Son, that rules the strands,
By Thetis' tinsel-slipper'd feet,
And the songs of Syrens sweet,
By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,
And fair Ligea's golden comb,
Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks,
Sleeking her soft alluring locks;
By all the Nymphs that nightly dance
Upon thy streams with wily glance,
Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head,
From thy coral-paven bed,
And bridle in thy headlong wave,

Till thou our summons answer'd have.
Listen, and save!

SABRINA *rises, attended by Water-Nymphs, and sings.*

By the rushy-fringed bank,
Where grows the willow, and the osier dank,
My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agate, and the azurn sheen
Of turkis blue, and emerald green,
That in the channel strays;
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printless feet
O'er the cowslip's velvet head,
That bends not as I tread;
Gentle Swain, at thy request,
I am here.
Spir. Goddess dear,
We implore thy powerful hand
To undo the charmed band
Of true virgin here distrest,
Through the force, and through the wile,
Of unblest enchanter vile.
Sabr. Shepherd, 'tis my office best
To help ensnared chastity:
Brightest Lady, look on me;
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast
Drops, that from my fountain pure
I have kept, of precious cure;
Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip:

Next this marble venom'd seat,
Smear'd with gums of glutinous heat,
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold:——
Now the spell hath lost his hold;
And I must haste, ere morning hour,
To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

SABRINA *descends, and* THE LADY *rises out of her seat.*

Spir. Virgin, daughter of Locrine
Sprung of old Anchises' line,
May thy brimmed waves for this
Their full tribute never miss
From a thousand petty rills,
That tumble down the snowy hills:
Summer drouth, or singed air,
Never scorch thy tresses fair,
Nor wet October's torrent flood
Thy molten crystal fill with mud;
May thy billows roll ashore
The beryl and the golden ore;
May thy lofty head be crown'd
With many a tower and terrace round,
And here and there thy banks upon
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon!
Come, Lady, while Heaven lends us grace,
Let us fly this cursed place,
Lest the sorcerer us entice
With some other new device.
Not a waste or needless sound,
Till we come to holier ground;

I shall be your faithful guide
Through this gloomy covert wide,
And not many furlongs thence
Is your Father's residence,
Where this night are met in state
Many a friend to gratulate
His wish'd presence; and beside
All the swains, that there abide,
With jigs and rural dance resort;
We shall catch them at their sport,
And our sudden coming there
Will double all their mirth and chere;
Come, let us haste, the stars grow high,
But night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.

The Scene changes, presenting Ludlow Town and the President's Castle; then come in Country Dancers, after them the ATTENDANT SPIRIT, *with the two* BROTHERS *and* THE LADY.

Song.

Spir. Back, Shepherds, back; enough your play,
Till next sun-shine holiday:
Here be, without duck or nod,
Other trippings to be trod
Of lighter toes, and such court guise
As Mercury did first devise,
With the mincing Dryades
On the lawns, and on the leas.

This second Song presents them to their Father and Mother.

Noble Lord, and Lady bright,
I have brought ye new delight,
Here behold so goodly grown
Three fair branches of your own;
Heaven hath timely tried their youth,
Their faith, their patience, and their truth,
And sent them here through hard assays,
With a crown of deathless praise,
To triumph in victorious dance
O'er sensual Folly and Intemperance.

The dances [*being*] *ended, the* SPIRIT *epiloguizes.*

Spir. To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky:
There I suck the liquid air
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three
That sing about the golden tree:
Along the crisped shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring;
The Graces, and the rosy-bosom'd Hours,
Thither all their bounties bring;
There eternal Summer dwells,
And West-Winds, with musky wing,
About the cedarn alleys fling
Nard and cassia's balmy smells.
Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks, that blow

Flowers of more mingled hew
Than her purfled scarf can shew,
And drenches with Elysian dew
(List, mortals, if your ears be true,)
Beds of hyacinth and roses,
Where young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound
In slumber soft, and on the ground
Sadly sits the Assyrian queen:
But far above in spangled sheen
Celestial Cupid, her fam'd son, advanc'd,
Holds his dear Psyche sweet entranc'd,
After her wandering labours long,
Till free consent the gods among
Make her his eternal bride,
And from her fair unspotted side
Two blissful twins are to be born,
Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn.
But now my task is smoothly done,
I can fly, or I can run,
Quickly to the green earth's end,
Where the bow'd welkin slow doth bend;
And from thence can soar as soon
To the corners of the moon.
Mortals, that would follow me,
Love Virtue; she alone is free:
She can teach you how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime;
Or if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.

LYCIDAS

In this MONODY, *the Author bewails a learned Friend, unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish Seas,* 1637. *And by occasion foretells the ruin of our corrupted Clergy, then in their highth.*

YET once more, O ye laurels, and once more
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never-sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And, with forc'd fingers rude,
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year:
Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,
Compels me to disturb your season due:
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer:
Who would not sing for Lycidas? He knew
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
He must not float upon his watery bier
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of some melodious tear.
Begin then, Sisters of the sacred well,
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring;
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.
Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse:
So may some gentle Muse

With lucky words favour my destin'd urn;
And as he passes turn,
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud.
For we were nurs'd upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock by fountain, shade, and rill.
Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd
Under the opening eye-lids of the morn,
We drove afield, and both together heard
What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star, that rose, at evening, bright,
Toward heaven's descent had slop'd his westering wheel.
Mean while the rural ditties were not mute,
Temper'd to the oaten flute;
Rough Satyrs danc'd, and Fauns with cloven heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long;
And old Damœtas lov'd to hear our song.
But, O the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone, and never must return!
Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods, and desart caves
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,
And all their echoes mourn:
The willows, and the hazel copses green,
Shall now no more be seen
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
As killing as the canker to the rose,
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,
When first the white-thorn blows;
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep,
Where your old Bards, the famous Druids, lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wisard stream:
Ay me! I fondly dream!
Had ye been there—for what could that have done?
What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,
Whom universal Nature did lament,
When, by the rout that made the hideous roar,
His goary visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?
Alas! what boots it with incessant care
To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?
Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights, and live laborious days;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise,"
Phœbus replied, and touch'd my trembling ears:
"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
"Nor in the glistering foil

" Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies;
" But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
" And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
" As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
" Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed."

O fountain Arethuse, and thou honour'd flood,
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crown'd with vocal reeds!
That strain I heard was of a higher mood:
But now my oat proceeds,
And listens to the herald of the sea
That came in Neptune's plea;
He ask'd the waves, and ask'd the felon winds,
What hard mishap hath doom'd this gentle swain?
And question'd every gust of rugged wings
That blows from off each beaked promontory:
They knew not of his story;
And sage Hippotades their answer brings,
That not a blast was from his dungeon stray'd;
The air was calm, and on the level brine
Sleek Panope with all her sisters play'd.
It was that fatal and perfidious bark,
Built in the eclipse, and rigg'd with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

Next Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge
Like to that sanguine flower inscrib'd with woe.
" Ah! who hath reft (quoth he) my dearest pledge? "
Last came, and last did go,
The pilot of the Galilean lake;

Two massy keys he bore of metals twain,
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain,)
He shook his miter'd locks, and stern bespake:
" How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
" Enow of such, as for their bellies' sake
" Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold?
" Of other care they little reckoning make,
" Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
" And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
" Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
" A sheep-hook, or have learn'd aught else the least
" That to the faithful herdman's art belongs!
" What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;
" And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs
" Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;
" The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
" But, swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,
" Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread:
" Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
" Daily devours apace, and nothing sed:
" But that two-handed engine at the door
" Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."
Return, Alpheus, the dread voice is past,
That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse,
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells, and flowerets of a thousand hues.
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use

Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart-star sparely looks;
Throw hither all your quaint enamell'd eyes,
That on the green turf suck the honied showers,
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freak'd with jet,
The glowing violet,
The musk-rose, and the well-attir'd woodbine,
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears:
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,
To strew the laureat herse where Lycid lies.
For so to interpose a little ease,
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise;
Ay me! Whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurl'd,
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
Where thou perhaps, under the whelming tide.
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world;
Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,
Where the great Vision of the guarded Mount
Looks towards Namancos and Bayona's hold;
Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth:
And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.

Weep no more, woful Shepherds, weep no more,
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor;

So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky:
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear might of Him that walk'd the waves;
Where, other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the saints above,
In solemn troops, and sweet societies,
That sing, and, singing, in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.
Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;
Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore,
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,
While the still morn went out with sandals gray;
He touch'd the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Dorick lay:
And now the sun had stretch'd out all the hills,
And now was dropt into the western bay:
At last he rose, and twitch'd his mantle blue:
To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.

SONNET

TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

O NIGHTINGALE, that on yon bloomy spray
Warblest at eve, when all the woods are still:
Thou with fresh hope the lover's heart dost fill,
While the jolly Hours lead on propitious May;
Thy liquid notes that close the eye of day,
First heard before the shallow cuckoo's bill,
Portend success in love; O, if Jove's will
Have link'd that amorous power to thy soft lay,
Now timely sing, ere the rude bird of hate
Foretel my hopeless doom in some grove nigh:
As thou from year to year hast sung too late
For my relief, yet hadst no reason why:
Whether the Muse, or Love, call thee his mate,
Both them I serve, and of their train am I.

SONNET

ON HIS BEING ARRIVED TO THE AGE OF TWENTY-THREE.

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stoln on his wing my three and twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,
That I to manhood am arriv'd so near;
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the Will of Heaven;
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.

SONNET

WHEN THE ASSAULT WAS INTENDED TO THE CITY.

Captain, or Colonel, or Knight in arms,
Whose chance on these defenceless doors may seize,
If deed of honour did thee ever please,
Guard them, and him within protect from harms.
He can requite thee; for he knows the charms
That call fame on such gentle acts as these,
And he can spread thy name o'er lands and seas,
Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms.
Lift not thy spear against the Muses' bower:
The great Emathian Conqueror bid spare
The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
Went to the ground: And the repeated air
Of sad Electra's poet had the power
To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare.

SONNET

TO A VIRTUOUS YOUNG LADY.

LADY, that in the prime of earliest youth
Wisely hath shunn'd the broad way and the green,
And with those few art eminently seen,
That labour up the hill of heavenly truth,
The better part with Mary and with Ruth
Chosen thou hast; and they that overween,
And at thy glowing virtues fret their spleen,
No anger find in thee, but pity and ruth.
Thy care is fix'd, and zealously attends
To fill thy odorous lamp with deeds of light,
And hope that reaps not shame. Therefore be sure
Thou, when the Bridegroom with his feastful friends
Passes to bliss at the mid hour of night,
Hast gain'd thy entrance, Virgin wise and pure.

SONNET

TO THE LADY MARGARET LEY.

Daughter to that good Earl, once President
Of England's Council and her Treasury,
Who liv'd in both, unstain'd with gold or fee,
And left them both, more in himself content,
Till the sad breaking of that Parliament
Broke him, as that dishonest victory
At Chæronea, fatal to liberty,
Kill'd with report that old man eloquent.
Though later born than to have known the days
Wherein your father flourish'd, yet by you,
Madam, methinks I see him living yet;
So well your words his noble virtues praise,
That all both judge you to relate them true,
And to possess them, honour'd Margaret.

SONNET

ON THE DETRACTION WHICH FOLLOWED UPON MY WRITING CERTAIN TREATISES.

A Book was writ of late call'd *Tetrachordon*,
And woven close, both matter, form, and stile;
The subject new: it walk'd the Town awhile,
Numbering good intellects; now seldom por'd on.
Cries the stall-reader, Bless us! what a word on
A title-page is this! and some in file
Stand spelling false, while one might walk to Mile-
End Green. Why is it harder, Sirs, than Gordon,
Colkitto, or Macdonnel, or Galasp?
Those rugged names to our like mouths grow sleek,
That would have made Quintilian stare and gasp.
Thy age, like ours, O Soul of Sir John Cheek,
Hated not learning worse than toad or asp,
When thou taught'st Cambridge, and king Edward Greek.

SONNET

ON THE SAME.

I DID but prompt the age to quit their clogs
By the known rules of ancient liberty,
When straight a barbarous noise environs me
Of owls and cuckoos, asses, apes and dogs:
As when those hinds that were transform'd to frogs
Rail'd at Latona's twin-born progeny,
Which after held the sun and moon in fee.
But this is got by casting pearl to hogs;
That bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,
And still revolt when truth would set them free.
Licence they mean when they cry Liberty;
For who loves that, must first be wise and good;
But from that mark how far they rove we see,
For all this waste of wealth, and loss of blood.

SONNET

TO MR H. LAWES ON THE PUBLISHING HIS AIRS.

Harry, whose tuneful and well measur'd song
First taught our English musick how to span
Words with just note and accent, not to scan
With Midas ears, committing short and long;
Thy worth and skill exempts thee from the throng,
With praise enough for Envy to look wan;
To after age thou shalt be writ the man,
That with smooth air could'st humour best our tongue.
Thou honour'st verse, and verse must lend her wing
To honour thee, the priest of Phœbus' quire,
That tun'st their happiest lines in hymn, or story.
Dante shall give Fame leave to set thee higher
Than his Casella, whom he woo'd to sing
Met in the milder shades of Purgatory.

SONNET

ON THE RELIGIOUS MEMORY OF MRS CATHERINE THOMSON, MY CHRISTIAN FRIEND, DECEASED 16 DECEMB., 1646.

When Faith and Love, which parted from thee never,
Had ripen'd thy just soul to dwell with God,
Meekly thou didst resign this earthly load
Of death, call'd life, which us from life doth sever.
Thy works and alms, and all thy good endeavour,
Staid not behind, nor in the grave were trod;
But, as Faith pointed with her golden rod,
Follow'd thee up to joy and bliss for ever.
Love led them on, and Faith, who knew them best
Thy hand-maids, clad them o'er with purple beams
And azure wings, that up they flew so drest,
And spake the truth of thee on glorious themes
Before the Judge; who thenceforth bid thee rest,
And drink thy fill of pure immortal streams.

ON THE NEW FORCERS OF CONSCIENCE UNDER THE LONG PARLIAMENT

Because you have thrown off your Prelate lord,
And with stiff vows renounc'd his Liturgy,
To seize the widow'd whore Plurality
From them whose sin ye envied, not abhorr'd;
Dare ye for this adjure the civil sword
To force our consciences that Christ set free,
And ride us with a classick hierarchy
Taught ye by mere A. S. and Rutherford?
Men, whose life, learning, faith, and pure intent,
Would have been held in high esteem with Paul,
Must now be nam'd and printed Hereticks
By shallow Edwards and Scotch what d'ye call:
But we do hope to find out all your tricks,
Your plots and packing worse than those of Trent,
That so the Parliament
May, with their wholesome and preventive shears,
Clip your phylacteries, though baulk your ears,
And succour our just fears,
When they shall read this clearly in your charge,
New Presbyter is but old Priest writ large.

SONNET

TO THE LORD GENERAL FAIRFAX.

Fairfax, whose name in arms through Europe rings,
Filling each mouth with envy or with praise,
And all her jealous monarchs with amaze
And rumours loud, that daunt remotest kings;
Thy firm unshaken virtue ever brings
Victory home, though new rebellions raise
Their Hydra heads, and the false North displays
Her broken league to imp their serpent-wings.
O yet a nobler task awaits thy hand,
(For what can war but endless war still breed?)
Till truth and right from violence be freed,
And publick faith clear'd from the shameful brand
Of publick fraud. In vain doth Valour bleed,
While Avarice and Rapine share the land.

SONNET

TO THE LORD GENERAL CROMWELL.

Cromwell, our chief of men, who through a cloud
Not of war only, but detractions rude,
Guided by faith and matchless fortitude,
To peace and truth thy glorious way hast plough'd,
And on the neck of crowned Fortune proud
Hast rear'd God's trophies, and his work pursued,
While Darwen stream, with blood of Scots imbrued,
And Dunbar field resounds thy praises loud,
And Worcester's laureat wreath. Yet much remains
To conquer still; Peace hath her victories
No less renown'd than War: New foes arise
Threatening to bind our souls with secular chains:
Help us to save free conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves, whose gospel is their maw.

SONNET

TO SIR HENRY VANE THE YOUNGER.

VANE, young in years, but in sage counsel old,
Than whom a better senator ne'er held
The helm of Rome, when gowns, not arms, repell'd
The fierce Epirot and the African bold;
Whether to settle peace, or to unfold
The drift of hollow States hard to be spell'd;
Then to advise how War may best, upheld,
Move by her two main nerves, iron and gold,
In all her equipage: besides to know
Both spiritual power and civil, what each means,
What severs each, thou hast learn'd, which few have done:
The bounds of either sword to thee we owe:
Therefore on thy firm hand Religion leans
In peace, and reckons thee her eldest son.

SONNET

ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEMONT.

AVENGE, O Lord, thy slaughter'd saints, whose bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipt stocks and stones,
Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piemontese that roll'd
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To Heaven. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundred-fold, who, having learn'd thy way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

SONNET

ON HIS BLINDNESS.

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide,
Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He, returning, chide;
"Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"
I fondly ask: But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
"Either man's work, or his own gifts; who best
"Bear his mild yoke, they serve Him best: his state
"Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
"And post o'er land and ocean without rest,
"They also serve who only stand and wait."

SONNET

TO MR LAWRENCE.

LAWRENCE, of virtuous father virtuous son,
Now that the fields are dank, and ways are mire,
Where shall we sometimes meet, and by the fire
Help waste a sullen day, what may be won
From the hard season gaining? Time will run
On smoother, till Favonius re-inspire
The frozen earth, and clothe in fresh attire
The lilly and rose, that neither sow'd nor spun.
What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,
Of Attick taste, with wine, whence we may rise
To hear the lute well touch'd, or artful voice
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air?
He who of those delights can judge, and spare
To interpose them oft, is not unwise.

SONNET

TO CYRIACK SKINNER.

Cyriack, whose grandsire, on the royal bench
Of British Themis, with no mean applause
Pronounc'd, and in his volumes taught, our laws,
Which others at their bar so often wrench;
To-day deep thoughts resolve with me to drench
In mirth that, after, no repenting draws;
Let Euclid rest, and Archimedes pause,
And what the Swede intends, and what the French.
To measure life learn thou betimes, and know
Toward solid good what leads the nearest way;
For other things mild Heaven a time ordains,
And disapproves that care, though wise in show,
That with superfluous burden loads the day,
And, when God sends a cheerful hour, refrains.

SONNET

TO THE SAME.

Cyriack, this three years' day these eyes, though clear,
To outward view, of blemish or of spot,
Bereft of light, their seeing have forgot;
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
Of sun, or moon, or star, throughout the year,
Or man, or woman. Yet I argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope; but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask?
The conscience, Friend, to have lost them overplied
In liberty's defence, my noble task,
Of which all Europe rings from side to side.
This thought might lead me through the world's vain mask
Content though blind, had I no better guide.

SONNET

ON HIS DECEASED WIFE.

Methought I saw my late espoused saint
Brought to me, like Alcestis, from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescu'd from death by force, though pale and faint.
Mine, as whom wash'd from spot of childbed taint
Purification in the old Law did save,
And such, as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind:
Her face was veil'd; yet to my fancied sight
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shin'd
So clear, as in no face with more delight.
But O, as to embrace me she inclin'd,
I wak'd; she fled; and day brought back my night.

THE END